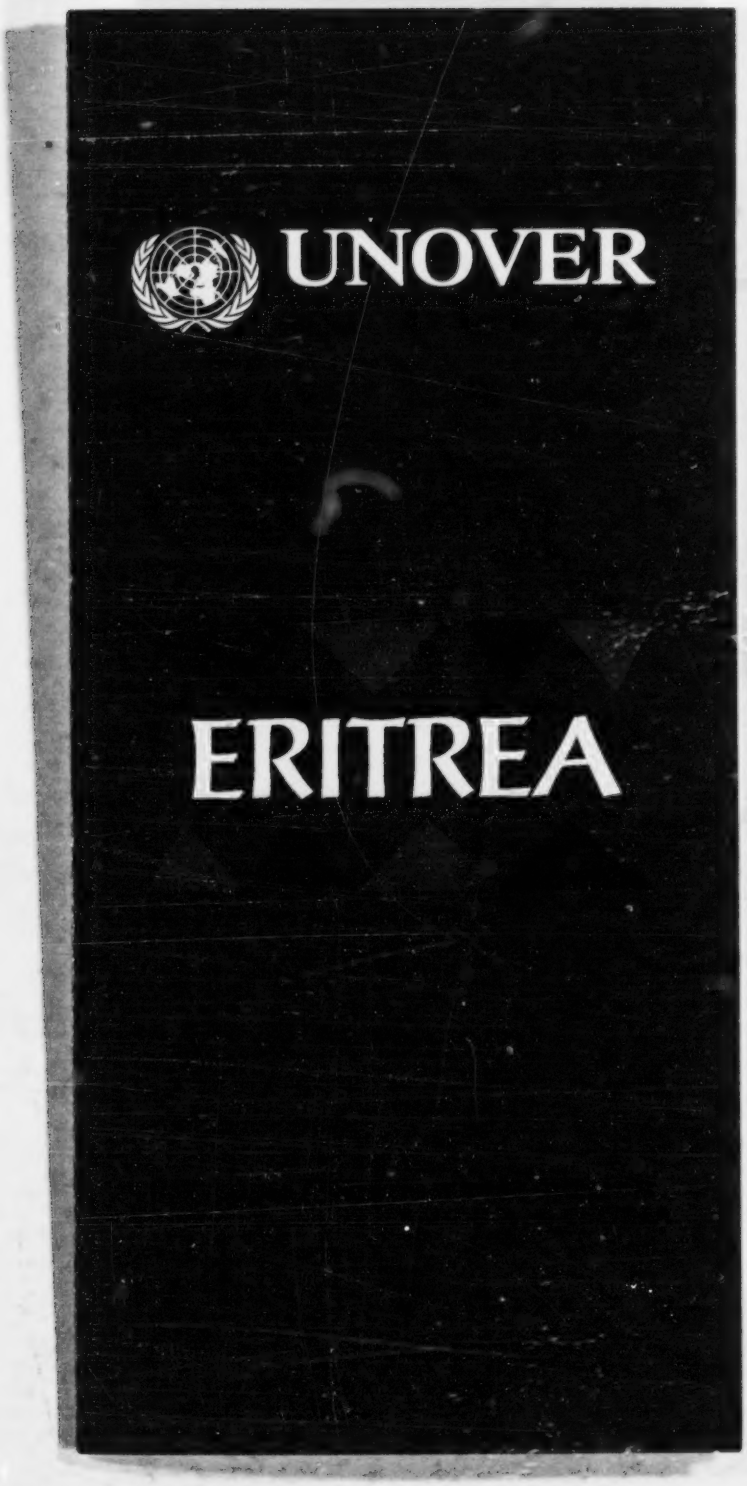
UNOVER
ERITREA

BACKGROUND

Over the years, interest has been expressed in an internationally observed referendum in Eritrea to determine the wishes of the people regarding their political status.

In May 1992, the Commissioner of the Referendum Commission of Eritrea invited the United Nations Secretary-General to send a delegation to observe and to verify the freeness, fairness and impartiality of the entire referendum process, scheduled from July 1992 to April 1993.

To gather relevant information, a United Nations Technical Team visited Eritrea in June 1992 and held discussions with the Referendum Commission, members of the Provisional Government of Eritrea and representatives of a wide spectrum of political, social and religious organizations. The Team also made technical suggestions aimed at improving some operational and legal aspects of the organization of the referendum.

The Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly in October 1992 a proposal for the establishment of a United Nations observer mission. In so doing, he expressed the view that the internationally observed referendum not only constituted an important step towards the establishment of democracy and consolidation of peace, but also contributed decisively to the stability of the region.

Acting on the recommendation of the Secretary-General, the General Assembly, by resolution 47/114 of 16 December 1992, authorized the establishment of the United Nations Observer Mission to Verify the Referendum in Eritrea (UNOVER).

UNOVER MANDATE

The overall objective of the Mission is to observe and verify the freeness, fairness and impartiality of the entire referendum process, so as to ensure that its results constitute the will of the people of Eritrea.

The terms of reference of the Mission are as follows:

▲ To verify the impartiality of the referendum authorities and organs, including the Referendum Commission, in all aspects and stages of the referendum process;

▲ To verify that there exists complete freedom of organization, movement, assembly and expression without hindrance or intimidation;

▲ To verify that there is equal access to media facilities and that there is fairness in the allocation of both the timing and the length of broadcasts;

▲ To verify that the referendum rolls are properly drawn up and that qualified voters are not denied identification and registration cards or the right to vote;

▲ To report to the referendum authorities on complaints, irregularities and interferences reported or observed and, if necessary, to request the referendum authorities to take action to resolve and rectify such complaints, irregularities or interference;

▲ To observe all activities related to the registration of voters, the organization of the poll, the referendum campaign, the poll itself and the counting, computation and announcement of the results.

In carrying out its mandate, UNOVER will be expected to gather factual information about the conduct of the referendum and, in particular, the decision of the electorate; to recognize that the ultimate judgement about the referendum process will be made by the electorate themselves and that its role will be to take note of the decision of the electorate as they determine their fate in a referendum; to recognize the independent character of the

Referendum Commission and establish a relationship with it on that basis; and, in its capacity as observer, to make constructive contributions to ensure the success of the referendum at every stage of the process.

The referendum process involves three stages—the registration of voters starting in mid-December 1992, the referendum campaign, and the taking of the poll in April 1993. During all three stages, UNOVER observers would maintain contact with community leaders and social organizations, visit municipalities and villages throughout the country, make random visits to registration centres to monitor registration, observe rallies and other referendum-related activities and verify compliance by all parties with the referendum proclamation and with the code of conduct.

UNOVER COMPOSITION

The Mission is headed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Samir Sanbar (Lebanon). As Chief of the Mission, the Special Representative will provide overall political direction to the observation and verification mission, with headquarters at Asmara. UNOVER will also have regional offices at Asmara, Keren and Mendefera, each headed by a regional coordinator and assisted by two electoral officers; two mobile teams of two persons each located at Asmara and Keren will make periodic visits to areas outside the jurisdiction of the regional offices. The Mission would be carried out by a total of 22 international staff, supported by local personnel.

During the referendum period in April 1993, it is estimated that UNOVER personnel would be augmented by 100 election monitors—some 50 observers from the United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations agency personnel within or close to Eritrea, 30 observers contributed by Member States, and 20 staff members from the United Nations Secretariat.

FINANCIAL ASPECTS

The financial requirements for the UNOVER operations are estimated at approximately $2 million. The Secretary-General has made an appeal to Member States for voluntary contributions to fund UNOVER through the United Nations Trust Fund for Electoral Observation, established pursuant to 1991 General Assembly resolution 46/137 on enhancing the effectiveness of the principles of periodic and genuine elections.

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